

McMullen: 'did the right thing'

United Press International
HOUSTON — Houston Astros owner John McMullen says the present storm at his door over the firing of a general manager does not make him uneasy for his position or his pocketbook.

Fans talked of boycotts and petitions, and minority stockholders talked of lawsuits the past two days over McMullen's unexplained replacement of Tal Smith with Al Rosen Monday. But McMullen said there would be no long-term ill to the performance or profitability of the team.

"The difference between winning and losing is always made up of hard decisions," he said Wednesday. "I honestly believe I did the proper thing. I anticipated this type of uproar. Perhaps I could not have predicted the intensity of it."

Threats by "three or four" limited partners to oust him were groundless, he said.

"Obviously I'm discouraged a lit-

tle bit by some of the attitude," he said. "But frankly I think it's without foundation. My disappointment is in having it discussed in the press."

An investors' revolt was lots of talk but little visible action.

A published report quoted a source as saying a lawsuit would be filed against McMullen in Texas, New York and Delaware. The partnership was chartered in Delaware.

General partner McMullen, his family and friends own 33 percent of the team. New York lawyer David LeFevre owns another 10 percent and 19 other Houston investors share the rest.

LeFevre, the angriest of the limited partners, said: "The general partner has a fiduciary responsibility to the limited partners. That's the law everywhere. And so a contention that a general partner has violated that responsibility is one of the possibilities."

McMullen's office in the Astrodome has been besieged with irate

phone callers since he fired Smith Monday. He has given no reason for replacing Smith with ex-New York Yankees president Al Rosen.

Smith has said he was fired because, as the acknowledged architect of the team, he received more credit for the Astros' championship this season than did McMullen.

LeFevre said there was an informal meeting of limited partners in New York Wednesday, but he refused to say how many were involved and where it was.

He was the man who interested McMullen, a millionaire New York shipbuilder who owned a limited share of the Yankees, to buy the Astros early in 1979. Now he is leading the effort to oust him. Such a move, LeFevre said, would take a vote of 60 percent of the ownership.

McMullen finished a day-and-a-half of separate interviews with reporters Wednesday morning.

"I have no regrets," he said. LeFevre said the limited partners

dismay at McMullen's actions was "unified," but comments of five limited partners contacted by UPI in Houston belied that description.

Three of them said they knew of no plans to fight the firing. One, who requested his name not be used, said it was McMullen's right to fire Smith, but his "intuition" indicated to him something was wrong and since LeFevre got the group together early in 1979, "I would defer to his judgment."

Most of the limited partners were unavailable or refused to return phone calls.

"We are still underground and are not gonna tip our hand to anybody," LeFevre said.

Don Sanders, senior vice president of E.F. Hutton, said: "I don't think any of the limited partners to my knowledge are hiding out. We're trying to handle it carefully. None of us are on a crusade against McMullen."

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hilt



Malone paces Rockets

United Press International
HOUSTON — Moses Malone's 38 points led the Houston Rockets to a 109-103 basketball victory over the Dallas Mavericks Wednesday night.

Reserve Jim Spanarkel came off the Dallas bench to score 13 second

period points to bring Dallas to within five points at the half. Dallas outscored Houston 19-4 in a third period spurt behind reserves Terry Duerod, Joe Hassett and Jerome Whitehead to tie the score at 82 at the end of the third period.

Calvin Murphy converted a throw on a technical foul in the fourth period to give coach Dick Motta with 2:30 left on a 100-99 lead. The lead was relinquished.

J.R. recovering; ready by Jan. 1

United Press International
SAN FRANCISCO — Doctors say that Houston Astros' pitching ace J.R. Richard, who underwent a complex series of blood vessel operations less than two weeks ago, has started running and will soon be throwing a ball again.

The 30-year-old pitcher underwent surgery Oct. 14 at the University of California Medical Center after suffering a near-fatal stroke in Houston last July.

Two surgical teams headed by Dr. Edwin J. Wylie and Dr. Ronald J. Stoney performed the delicate 18-hour surgery Oct. 14 to repair a major artery leading to the 6-foot-8-inch hurler's pitching arm.

Dr. Wylie said Monday the artery had been damaged by what is known medically as a "thoracic outlet compression syndrome," a condition where greatly enlarged muscles coupled with massive bone structure create severe pressure on a major artery.

The UC Medical Center teams used an 8-inch arterial graft to repair the artery, which they said is now carrying blood freely from the pitcher's heart down into his lower right arm.

In Richard's case, said Wylie, it was the scalenus anticus muscle that had become overlarge due to pitching and weight-lifting. As a result, every time Richard raised his arm to throw, the muscle pinched a segment of the subclavian artery.

The repeated trauma over the years caused a large clot to form inside the artery, which eventually lengthened and backed up to the carotid artery — the crucial vessel carrying blood to the brain.

It was the blocked carotid artery that caused Richard's stroke and would have killed him without surgery, Wylie said. It has also caused some doctors to speculate that Richard may be at the end of his pitching career, although Wylie indicated only time will tell.

"But James Rodney Richard is recovering rapidly," Wylie said. "He has a full range of motion in his arm already. He wants to run now, and we're letting him. He wants to lift weights again, and he will — very soon. We expect him to be in full activity by Jan. 1."

Richard and his wife, who both refused to talk with reporters, were still in California Monday, but expect to return to Houston in a day or two.

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